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ABSTRACT

This manual is intended for instructors who wish to help students improve their writing skills. Part 1 of the manual which is divided into three sections details reasons why students have problems with writing, and includes examples of some faulty constructions. The final section includes: (1) a summary of strategies for improving student writing; (2) how to make good writing skills important to students; and (3) instructional activities with suggested student responses. Part 1 also includes a section on grading student papers as part of the revision process, a select bibliography, and appendices describing the English Language Proficiency Program and English Writing Courses. Part 2, "For the Students," consists of a number of sections which the instructor can duplicate for the students to use as writing aids. (SM)

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IMPROVING THE WRITING OF GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS: A MANUAL FOR INSTRUCTORS AND SOME HANDOUTS FOR STUDENTS

Department of Geography
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario

September 1983

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Ralph R. Krueger
//

INTRODUCTION:
THE PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual is intended for instructors - both faculty members and teaching assistants - in the Department of Geography, who wish to help their students improve their written English. This manual is divided into two parts. The first part is intended for the instructor. It is designed to help him or her

- identify students' writing problems and help solve those problems;
- encourage the students to adopt constructive revision practices;
- use and recommend outside sources of help - for example, writing handbooks and English courses.

Part II, "For the Student", consists of a number of sections which the instructor can duplicate and hand to the students as writing aids.

This manual is based on the following premises:

1. It is not easy to improve students' writing at such a late stage in their educational development. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility to do what we can during their stay in university. Requiring the English Language Proficiency Examination and directing students to the most appropriate English Writing courses are beginning steps in helping our students become better writers.

2. Although taking writing courses offered by the Department of English can be helpful, students will improve their writing more willingly, quickly, and effectively when their written English is considered within the context of their field of study. In other words, geography students must learn to write by writing about geography, and having that writing constructively criticized by their teachers.

3. Revising is the most crucial part of writing. The ultimate goal is to get students to correct and revise their own essays independently.

PART I: FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

The first section is a somewhat philosophical discussion of why students have problems with writing; the second section gives examples of some common faulty constructions. If you have been teaching for many years, know what the problem is, and are familiar with faulty equations, dangling modifiers and telescoped meaning, you may want to skip the first two sections and jump right into the heart of the manual, IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING: A SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES, pp. 9-10, MAKING GOOD WRITING IMPORTANT TO THE STUDENT, p. 11, INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT RESPONSES, p. 12, MARKING AS PART OF THE REVISION PROCESS, pp. 13-16.

Two appendices have been included to provide a better appreciation of what goes on in the English Language Proficiency Program and to help instructors to direct students to the most appropriate English writing courses.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Three times a year, a crowd of university students tramps gloomily into a gymnasium to sit a test, failure of which - for some of them - means they cannot graduate.

The exam is in English Language Proficiency. It tests their writing for overall focus and development, paragraph unity and coherence, sentence logic and clarity. In other words - can they write?

The lowest pass mark is the standard prescribed for Grade 13 students in Writing Skills in Ontario (1978). Fourteen percent of these students will fail. There they are, the cream of the nation's youth, minds (it is rumoured) like steel traps, composing prose that writhes and expires like a caught coyote. The University of Waterloo has even set up a Writing Clinic that attempts to patch up the problem, and is offering courses in basic English that would seem to be more appropriate at a Secondary School level. Why?

Read ANY Books Lately?

> I imagine things can be found good and bad in almost any library, but for one whose standards have flopped as ours, it does not stand out as a shing example.
>
> The cards in a card index are usually catalogued according to the disimal system, the aphibledical system, or both.

Many students rarely read books any more: 'read', not in the sense of hurtling over the print to catch the plot, but 'read' in the sense of absorbing the meaning through the form, following and absorbing the meaning by the thread of its syntax and the value of the words. Most proficient writers become so by reading proficient writing, not by learning grammatical rules and not by learning from the television set.

A television program rarely demands that you attentively follow an argument through time and space to attain your reward. The glittering prizes are immediate: multi-sensual flashes which, through sound, colour, movement and gesture, convey the 'right answer', the 'meat of the matter' without 'wasting' the viewer's time.

Many students' essays illustrate this attempt to communicate a meaning like a skit from "60 Minutes". Knowing what they want to say, their aim is to get it somehow onto that piece of paper - everything at the same time. An illogical, often incoherent rubble of nouns, non-words, verbs, arbitrarily selected prepositions (all words composed of two letters mean pretty well the same thing, after all), and commas hurled haphazardly into a pile of telescoped meanings and mixed tenses is what you get.

> Pornography is related to crimes of all sorts, and also effects on those who do not believe God and communism. The next argument agains porn is the devaluing of sexuality. This is a very highly believed opinion where those against feel sex of any shape or form is strictly present between a loving couple in marriage. Masturbation is a pointless act to these strong believers. It is these so-called disgusting, morally shattering violet orientated pictures which intimidate the oncoming of the masturbation act. In this case, the act of masturbation and the halting of ruining what sex should be in true love are both in nead of discreasing, by these believers.[1]

Written English as a Foreign Language

The blame does not lie solely with the television set. Perhaps some high school teacher once commended our Pornography essayist for her Joycean prose. Certainly, the teachers in the high schools were not mere bystanders at the spawning of a generation of illiterates, as they applauded content at the expense of form and emphasized speaking English at the expense of writing it. One undergraduate claims that in his English class at high school, the pupils wrote only one paper all term: each had to select a pop song, analyse it for imagery and read the paper out in class, thus initiating a discussion. The teacher did not even look at the writing itself, but marked the student for 'presentation'.

The fruits of this emphasis can be seen in the written English: the use of contractions, such as can't, won't, isn't; the informal meaninglessness of "All you have to do is look at the facts and you'll see that I'm right"; the use of expressions that have been heard but not seen - 'could of', would of', 'alot', 'to all intensive purposes'; phonetically spelled words whose sources were tongues that could not pronounce the words in the first place - 'strickly', 'mathmatics', 'labratory'; the colloquial use of 'sure' and 'real' - "This sure is a long book.", "The railway car was real big."

The intellectual leap from the tea table talk of high school to the University is often more than the freshman brain can bear. The head-on collision between the two, results in the kind of paraplegic prose that mixes, at worst, slang with High English, and presents, at best, a Grade 10 idea in excruciatingly long-winded textbook jargon.

The fallacy that the higher falutin' the expression, the

---

[1] From an essay on "Pornography", written by a student in the Department of Sociology, Renison College, 1993. The writer is a native English speaker.

weightier the idea is so commonly demonstrated in university textbooks that it is all but impossible to persuade students of the opposite - that simplest is best. Here is a student discussing the invention of the printing press in 1450: "More and more people at this time were taught the skills necessary to gain the meaning of the print", in other words, to read.

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

Omitted dots and dashes, poor spelling, and missing commas are not the real problems. These are mere mechanical kinks that can be fixed with the right tool - a dictionary or a grammar book. Far more serious, because they originate in the writer's actual thinking processes, are those errors of syntax and diction (a misunderstanding of a word's value, telescoped meaning, faulty parallelism, misused prepositions) that are manifestations of a mind in chaos, a mind unable to connect ideas with one another, a mind's eye blind to the relationships - indeed, to the differences - between people and things. Some examples of these types of language errors follow:

1. Misused Passive Voice

   Misuse: "Jane was born in 1970 and was planned to be born."

   Problem: Who is doing the planning? This device, which is used commonly enough to avoid attributing an act to any one person (and hence, prevalent in government publications!), is here misused, creating an awkward and almost nonsensical sentence.

   Corrected: "Jane's birth in 1970 was planned by her parents."

2. Faulty Equation

   Example: "Pacifiers and thumbs were considered dirty habits."

   Problem: A thumb is not a dirty habit; neither, for that matter, is a pacifier.

   Corrected: "Sucking pacifiers and thumbs was considered a dirty habit."

3. Incorrect Preposition

   Example: "Lack of a funeral and visitation will have no effect on the deceased, but it can have serious consequences the survivor."

   Problem: The writer should have written, "consequences for".
   This kind of preposition misuse is one of the commonest problems in student writing; the pairing of words with the appropriate preposition is learned only through reading and becoming familiar with the pairing through their context.

4. Dangling Modifier

Example: "If dead, I'd look in Who's Who in America. If alive, I'd look in the Dictionary of American Biography."

Problem: By putting himself ("I'd") flush with the modifiers ("If dead..., if alive..."), the writer has succeeded in making himself - instead of the real subject - the hypothetically alive/dead person.

Corrected: "If the person were dead, I'd look him up in Who's Who in America. If he were alive, I'd look him up in the Dictionary of American Biography."

5. Misplaced Modifiers

Example: "In 1924 Professor Wright photographed Yosemite Valley from Mount Hamilton in California which was 120 miles away using infra-red films."

Problem: The modifier, "using infra-red films", is not placed flush with the item it modifies, "Professor Wright photographed".

Corrected: "In 1924, Professor Wright, using infra-red films, photographed Yosemite Valley from Mount Hamilton, which was 120 miles away."

6. Telescoped Meaning

Example: "The spouses of suicides may react contemplating how the person could have done such a terrible thing to them. It is in part true that one spouse did indeed do it to them, from an accumulation of frustration and despair along with a deaf ear."

Problem: Well, the writer apparently knows what he means - that the spouse 'turned a deaf ear' to the problems of the suicidal person, hence partly causing the suicide. As if he were teasing a lump of raw wool, the reader has to pull a more extended meaning from the meagre tuft of words.

Corrected: "The spouse of a suicide often agonizes as she contemplates how her mate could have done such a thing to her. She may indeed properly feel some remorse; she may have turned a deaf ear to him, adding to his frustration and despair."

In fact, most of the problems listed above could be gathered under the one heading of "Telescoped Meaning". The corrected versions are often longer than the original example. This revision is required because the common denominator of most of the

examples is that they assume more than they say - they make assumptions about the knowledge of the reader, who has to extrapolate from a few words to attain the larger, intended, meaning. The writer has imagined a TV screen behind his shoulder, illustrating and expanding on what he is saying in front of it. And who is supplying the screen? You, the instructor. You have been endowed with a glory and a power that can only be described as omniscient, a situation which is, of course, all very flattering, but you have to work hard at being God.

The writing problems catalogued above are symptomatic of a deeply frozen mammoth of a problem originating in a primordial part of the student's brain. In such a case, pointing out all along the margins of his essay that he is crossing his parallels, dangling his modifiers, and telescoping his meanings is like chipping with a plastic chisel at the glacier face. Instead of the instructors trying to dig up and melt the problem, perhaps they should give the student the proper tools to do the job himself. Following are a few suggestions about how this might be done.

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING: A SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

I. INCENTIVES

1.	Show students that the standard of their written English will affect their overall grade.	See "MAKING GOOD WRITING IMPORTANT TO THE STUDENT", p.11.
2.	Specify the aim of writing the report/essay; the audience; the role of the writer (i.e., the appropriate narrative voice).	
3.	Help the students decide on a focus for their essay early on in the term.	
4.	Set small assignments often throughout the term to accustom the students to writing and so prevent the onset of writer's paralysis.	
5.	Give the students explicit guidelines regarding the topic that they should be addressing in the paper.	See HANDOUT C.
6.	Give them a list of criteria you expect them to fulfil in the paper, against which they will be marked.	See HANDOUTS A and B.
7.	Give them photocopies of 'A' class papers as models of excellence.	

II. DRAFTS

1.	Stress the importance of revision by setting several draft assignments.	See "INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT RESPONSE", p.12.
2.	Give them a set of editorial guidelines and a checklist to give them some idea of what to look for when revising a paper.	See HANDOUTS A, D and E.
3.	Get them to mark each others' papers in class to give them a clearer idea of mistakes they make themselves.	See "MARKING AS PART OF THE REVISION PROCESS, pp.

III. CONSTRUCTIVE MARKING

1.	Make constructive criticisms of the early drafts, instead of simply passing negative judgement.	See "MARKING AS PART OF THE REVISION PROCESS", pp.13-14.
2.	Make 'grade contracts' on the early drafts to give an incentive for improvement and to provide direction.	"
3.	Mark papers against the criteria provided to the students before they wrote their papers.	See HANDOUTS A and B.
4.	If, after all, they fail, direct them to take a writing course.	See "ENGLISH WRITING COURSES", pp.21-26.

MAKING GOOD WRITING IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS

> When I consider the above mistakes plus some others it will all boil down to the fact that it is the cause of disinterest or just trying to get by, because yet today their remains the fact that the taking of this course is still a means toward an end and still not caring whether I make a D or A but only whether I pass or flunk is only the interest I have for this associating to each other and not with the association of words and ideas of words which would make my other courses easier, if I had control over my English or rather rhetoric.[1]

Since the current trends in North American education have students striving for grades rather than knowledge, the only way - at the moment - to make good writing important to the students is by hitting 'em where it hurts - right slap in the grades. Since no amount of talk about "writing like a geographer is thinking like a geographer", has affected the student's wish to write better, some teachers have started communicating the idea - very effectively, it seems - through their marking systems.

The Department of Sociology at Renison College, for instance, has instituted a system whereby the essays are first marked for 'quality of expression' by an English graduate, and then by the Sociology faculty member for content. The quality of expression mark constitutes 20% of the grade. A noteworthy observation regarding this practice from one of the participating instructors is that, almost without exception, the "quality of expression" mark indicates the paper's overall merit. For example, if a paper is given 15/20 for its quality of expression, the overall percentage mark is likely to be 75%. sk

Following is a chart (reproduced from Libbee and Young's article) outlining "Instructional Activities and Student Response". It suggests a chronology of the essay writing process - how and when the instructor organizes the writing and revising of papers; and how, when, and with what the student responds.

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[1] "Rhet as Writ", a collection of student bloopers from the University of Illinois, n.d.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT RESPONSE*

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENTS
1. Assign paper	1. Read widely in area of interest.
2. Begin classroom prewriting exercises. Get students to manipulate data, draft maps, explore data sources, analyse distributions, compare patterns, and brainstorm possible topics.	2. Investigate data sources in area of interest. Make a tentative decision about topic and data base.
3. Discuss topics with students, and approve topics and data sources.	3. Draft working maps from the data. Write introduction to paper.
4. Have students edit each other's introduction in class.	4. Revise introduction and write description of data.
5. Meet individually with students to discuss introduction, data description and further ways of manipulating and interpreting the data.	5. Write initial draft of paper.
6. Provide detailed written comments on the paper and an approximate grade contract for revision.	6. Rewrite the paper according to the instructor's comments.
7. Evaluate the final product and assign a grade. Comment on improvements made in the paper; indicate further improvements that could be made.	

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* Michael Libbee and Dennis Young, "Teaching Writing in Geography Classes", Journal of Geography, Vol. 82, No. 1 (1983), pp. 23-25.

MARKING AS PART OF THE REVISION PROCESS

Merely marking and grading the one paper right at the end of term is useless to the student if we want to help him improve his writing. Instead, we might better employ the method of the multiple-draft assignment, that is, write-assess-rewrite. Few students will have the incentive to do this themselves; the instructor must incorporate the method into the teaching process (see "Instructional Activities and Student Response", p. 12). In marking the preliminary drafts, the instructor might find the following pointers useful.

1. Enlist the Help of the Class Members

   A tested and successful method of helping students see the errors they are making is to get them to assess each other's drafts. A student will often pinpoint an error in another's essay that he does not recognize in his own. One method is to pair the students off, ask them to exchange drafted papers, and give them time to read through the paper, grade it, justify that grade and comment on any flaws or good points. It may be useful, in small classes, to give the students until the next class to complete this task. A marking chart will help them to make explicit comments (see HANDOUTS A and B). The instructor should make clear whether or not the 'mark' assigned by a student's peer will be incorporated in some way into his final grade.

2. In Your Comments, Suggest Improvements Rather than Simply Pass Judgements

   Instead of merely proclaiming that an argument is superficial, point out in what way it is superficial. That is, note the salient points that should have been considered.

3. Avoid Technical/Grammatical Terms

   Grammar-centered responses encourage superficial revision, such as the repositioning of a comma, instead of the overhaul of the sentence. In any case, technical terms mean very little to most students, who will be paralysed at the sound or sight of the formula "Faulty Predication" or "Dangling Modifier" (well, how many instructors outside of the English Department know what the words mean, even if they do not themselves commit the crime?) If you do use a grammatical term, provide a written explanation of it, or refer the students to a specific page in a manual known to be in their possession.

4. Employ the Aid of Writing Manuals

   For specific, repeated errors, refer the student in a final

comment to the particular section in the writing manual the class is using. However, only that student with a real desire to improve will bother to get the book off the shelf, dust it off and find the relevant page. You could try issuing a threat ("I don't expect to find this error in one of your essays again. If I do I'll..."). A more gentlemanly tactic might be this: to issue every student with a copy of Ellsworth's English Simplified (see Bibliography for details). The benefits of this are manifold:

- It is not a 'book'; it is more like a pamphlet, so it does not strike into the undergraduate's heart that terror of the 'Thing Between Hard Covers'.
- Its convenient size makes it easy to keep in the back of a file folder, or it may be hole-punched for insertion in a three-ring binder.
- The sections are organized specifically for quick reference: the instructor need only cite the section, e.g., "For correct use of prepositions, see Ellsworth, G-2, 6."
- At the back of the booklet is a "Correction Chart", which charts correction symbols, their meanings, an example of the error and the reference to the place in the text where the error is dealt with, e.g.,

  Symbol: Sp.
  Meaning: Correct misspelled word.
  Example of error: truely.
  Reference: S.1-S.3.

5. Make a 'Grade Contract' on the Initial Draft

Further to the observation that grades motivate, you might include among your comments on the initial draft, "In order to get a 'B' on this paper, you will have to do the following..."

6. Specify the Criteria and Mark the Paper According to Same

Specify the criteria by which you will be assessing the essay in the form of a handout to the students at the same time as you set the assignment. Mark the student's writing on how well it met the pre-set criteria by means of a marking guideline. See "Marking Guidelines" in HANDOUTS A and B.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITING HANDBOOKS

Adyer, Sir Ernest. The Complete Plain Words (Penguin).

Avis, Walter S. and Jim W. Corder. Handbook of Current English, Canadian edition (Toronto: Gage, 1979).

Witty, useful and inexpensive. One of the few Handbooks with a useful and detailed section on revising and correcting a paper.

Baker, Sheridan. The Practical Stylist. Canadian edition prepared by Ken Ledbetter and Lawrence B. Gamache. (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).

Less a mechanical than an 'amiable' book. Demonstrates with wit and style the points it makes. Has a useful checklist to refer to at the second draft stage; an excellent alphabetically-organised glossary of common mistakes and misuses; reproduces sample essays; lists the marker's symbols for common errors.

Ellsworth, Blanche. English Simplified. 4th edition. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

This is the handbook given to some students in the English Department's Correspondence Program. It is a folder-sized, pamphlet style booklet that can be attached inside a file folder. Discusses every aspect of punctuation, grammar, and usage in a useful, easy-reference style. Would be highly recommended for instructors to use as a reference book for students with specific problems, e.g., instructors, instead of writing out a lengthy explanation of the correct use of brackets, could simply write, "See Ellsworth, P. 12. 1." (The P. refers to a section, not a page; this booklet is organized alphabetically.)

Essays and Reports: A Handbook. (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 2nd ed. 1981).

Another folder-sized pamphlet-style handbook which is especially useful for its emphasis on the 'preliminaries': the outline, the thesis statement, paragraph-plotting, etc.

Follett, Wilson. Modern American Usage. Edited by Jacques Barzun (New York: Warner Books, 1966).

Dictionary-style listings of commonly misused words, with detailed explanations of their correct usage and examples.

Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter S. Achbert. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations.

(New York: Modern Language Ass. 1980).

A slim volume which deals with research and writing, the mechanics of writing, preparing a manuscript for the humanities, correct documentation, bibliography, abbreviations and reference works.

Griffin, C.W. "Using Writing to Teach Many Disciplines", Improving College and University Teaching, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 121-128.

Hairston, Maxine. A Contemporary Rhetoric (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

Deals with the finer points of writing excellent - rather than merely standard, acceptable - prose. Discusses in detail and with examples the audience, word use, modes of argument, reasoning, and logic.

Strunk, William Jr. and E.B. White. The Elements of Style, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979).

A delightful book. One of the few writing handbooks that is interesting to read. Emphasizes brevity, precision, and clarity of language.

Thomas, W.K. Correct Form in Essay Writing. (Waterloo: University of Waterloo English Department, 1979).

A brief University of Waterloo handbook designed for all levels of students.

Turabian, Kate. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 3rd rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

An authoritative guide to scholarly style for typewritten reports of research. It covers matters of format, footnotes, bibliography, proper use of quotations, and use of maps, tables, and illustrations. It clarifies points of form by numerous examples and sample pages. A detailed index makes it an easy reference book to use. Best all round style manual for geography students at all levels.

APPENDIX A

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY PROGRAM

Introduction

Concern that some students encounter academic difficulties because they lack the basic writing skills required for university work led to the establishment of the English Language Proficiency Program at the University of Waterloo in 1976. This Program consists of an Examination and a Writing Clinic, the latter providing intensive, individual instruction in basic language skills. Undergraduate students in five Faculties - Arts, Environmental Studies, Human Kinetics and Leisure Studies, Mathematics, and Science - must demonstrate competence in written English in order to qualify for a bachelor's degree. While specific requirements vary slightly from faculty to faculty, in general students must achieve a mark of at least 50% on the English Language Proficiency Examination.

The English Language Proficiency Examination

The English Language Proficiency Examination requires a student to write a 300-500 word impromptu expository essay. This Examination is given before classes begin each fall and at two other times during the academic year. Its purpose is to identify those students who may need special help with their writing in order to succeed in their university assignments.

The essays are evaluated on a five-point scale by Writing Clinic Tutors who have been carefully prepared to subject each essay to three structural tests: overall focus and development, paragraph unity and coherence, and sentence logic and clarity. Using a large number of the actual Examination essays as illustrative material, the Director of the English Language Proficiency Program and the Program Supervisor conduct training sessions with the markers. These sessions continue for one or more days following each sitting of the Examination - until the Program Director and Supervisor are confident that the markers are ready to evaluate the essays sensibly and appropriately on their own.

Each essay is evaluated independently on a five point scale by at least three markers. If two of the three markers do not agree exactly on the mark, or if one of the markers is more than one mark away, the essay is read by a fourth, and in some cases, a fifth marker. The individual marking is monitored continuously, and the grouping of markers is changed daily. Additional training sessions are scheduled as required.

The Five Point Scale

Essays are assigned a numerical value of one to five according to the following criteria:

5) - ideas are clearly and logically presented and adequately developed;
   - organization is clear and coherent;
   - sentences are clear and orderly and free from errors in grammar and punctuation;
   - words are used appropriately and spelled correctly.

4) - ideas are clearly presented;
   - organization is clear and coherent;
   - sentences are clear and free from serious errors in grammar and expression.

3) - organization is unified and coherent;
   - sentences are generally free from serious errors in grammar and expression.

2) - organization and development are unclear or incoherent;
   - or, sentences are muddled or seriously flawed.

1) - organizaton and development are unclear or incoherent;
   - and, sentences are muddled or seriously flawed.

Typically, students who receive low marks on the Examination appear to have problems both with the structure of sentences and with the organization and structure of larger prose units. A value of three is the lowest pass category and is the standard prescribed for Grade 13 students in Writing Skills in Ontario (1978). Markers examine the clarity of the writing only and ignore whatever qualities of mind or defects of imagination the writing may suggest. Only those flaws in grammar and expression that cause an alert reader to stumble or become confused are considered serious in evaluating the essays.

The Writing Clinic

The Writing Clinic at the University of Waterloo was created in the Fall of 1976 to provide remedial help for students in the Faculty of Arts who could not pass the English Language Proficiency Examination. It is considered a valuable resource both by students and by faculty members; all of the students who attend the Clinic with regularity improve their writing skills, and most of them report that their confidence in these skills improves as well.

The Clinic is staffed by well-trained and highly competent part-time tutors, many of whom are qualified teachers with diverse academic backgrounds. Since they work individually with the students, each student is always working on his problems at his level. Each student is assigned a particular tutor, who diagnoses the student's writing problems and works with the student to solve these problems. Students who cannot spell learn to spell by becoming more aware of words and of the spelling patterns that

occur in the English language. Students who can't punctuate learn to recognize the grammatical units that determine punctuation. Students who can't seem to write a coherent essay learn to begin with a simple assertion, the component parts of which become topic sentences for paragraphs. Every student writes something each week, but he may also be given drills and exercises in order to focus his attention on particular problems. Tutors do not assign homework; rather, each time the student writes something or completes an exercise, his tutor goes over it with him, discusses the problems that appear, and has him revise his work on the spot. This routine is repeated until the student demonstrates that, on his own, he can write with the competence that his faculty requires.

Pragmatism and sensitivity probably best describe the Writing Clinic. Certainly the Clinic offers no magic and no fancy machinery, but rather focusses the attention of the student and of the tutor on a simple, clearly defined activity: writing clear, functional English prose. Given the time and opportunity, any teacher at almost any level could accomplish the same end.

An initial interview is held with each student so that the tutor can acquaint the student with the Clinic's purpose and explore the student's feelings about language, writing, and the Proficiency Program. It is possible that a student may be surprised or upset about the Examination; this initial conference is intended to make clear the fact that the Proficiency Examination is not judgmental but diagnostic. During this conference, students are made aware that work done in the Clinic is directed specifically toward their own writing problems, that they will see the same tutor for each appointment, and that usually they are expected to attend the Clinic for three hours each week.

The first scheduled meeting of the student with his regular tutor is a "get acquainted" session. The tutor usually learns about the student's background in language, his program in university and the nature of the assignments he will be expected to fulfill, his general interests, and his motivation. All of these characteristics are influential in the tutoring situation. Often for this first session the tutor will ask the student to write a short assignment of one paragraph in length. This assignment supplies the tutor with another writing sample but, more importantly, it starts the writing process immediately. Freshman students tend to feel they have nothing to write about; tutors begin in this first session to dissipate this reserve and reticence. Such consideration is shown to students throughout their progress in the Writing Clinic. If the student is too shy to write from biographical detail, then the tutor explores hobbies, books, movies, vacations, and current events, looking for a key that will unlock the student's imagination. A freshman student is often relieved and happy to find a university teaching person who is not only warm and personable, but easily accessible as well. By the end of the first session, the tutor hopes to have begun developing the rapport which is important if the tutor is to work effectively with the student.

Such particular attention to individual writing problems does work. Over 90% of the students who regularly attend the Writing Clinic are able to pass the Proficiency Examination after receiving an average of 30 hours of instruction.

The advantage that this arrangement has over the typical English composition class is obvious: it is more efficient for the individual student (who does not have to spend time on the problems of others) and more effective pedagogically (students show greater improvement in a shorter period of time). The approach is completely pragmatic: if something works with a student, fine; if it doesn't, the tutor tries something else. Writing Clinic resources available to the tutor include a 200-volume library; a 210-page Tutors' Manual outlining procedures, approaches, problems, and solutions; a large collection of exercises, assignments, and handouts; and a completely annotated bibliography of resource materials.[1]

Who May Attend the Writing Clinic?

From September 1983, only students who have failed the English Language Proficiency Examination will be accepted for tutoring at the Writing Clinic. Students may also be referred to the Clinic with a written note from a University instructor. Since passing the exam does not by any means indicate that the student is fully capable of writing an essay worthy of a university student, other means must be found for improving the 'borderline' student's English proficiency. One such means is a course in writing offered by the Department of English.

For more details about the English Language Proficiency Examination and the Writing Clinic, phone Extension 2837 or 2329.

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[1] Reprinted from English Language Proficiency Program: General Information (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1982). Updated and corrected by Alan McLachlin, September, 1983.

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH WRITING COURSES

The Department of English has responded to the need to improve students' writing skills by developing about a dozen custom-designed courses. English 109, for example, was first offered by the English Department in the Fall Term of 1974 in answer to an urgent request from other departments for a course in writing that could be taken by non-English majors.

The Geography Department requires one English writing course of all students by the end of their second year. This list should help faculty members advise students to take the most appropriate course.

The courses have been divided into two categories: basic courses in Written English, and courses in more advanced Written English. Instructors might find it useful to photocopy some of these course descriptions and give them to students whom they feel would benefit from them. Many students are - not without some justification - put off by the idea of a course in writing. Anyone who has taken English 109/110 under the instruction of Ken Ledbetter will know that a writing course need not be a bore.

Below is a brief description of first and second year courses that will help the Geography faculty to advise students.

Recommended English Writing Courses

1. Students whose first language is English, whose writing skills are weak: **English 109/110**

2. Students whose first language is not English, whose writing skills are weak: **English 129R**

3. First year students who have mastered basic writing skills, but who need help in writing clearly and effectively: **English 140R/141R, 150/151**

4. Second year students who have a basic grasp of written English, but who can benefit from further instruction and practice in essay or report writing: **English 209/210**

I. Basic Courses in Written English

(a) ENGLISH 109, Introduction to Essay Writing I

Terms Offered: Fall, Winter, Spring
Credit: 0.5
Type of Teaching: 1 lecture, 1 three-hour lab per week
Suitable for: Students with serious writing problems: those who cannot spell, do not know how to construct a sentence, have little concept of what an essay is. Students whose mother tongue is English.
Calendar Description: The course teaches the construction of the expository essay with attention to the structure of good paragraphs, to techniques of putting the essay together, and to the nature of the language. Ten to twelve short writing assignments are required. Also offered at St. Jerome's College.
Comments: The course is more interesting than it sounds. Following is a comment from a past student of English 109:

> As you all know, I have a reputation for absolutely detesting English. It is a hatred that reaches a long way back into my scholastic past. It started as a small dislike and soon fireballed into a deep, pathological hatred. This year I have learned one astounding thing. I have learned that English is all right.
>
> This drastic change in attitude was greatly helped along by the zany lectures of Professor Ledbetter. For the first time in my life, I am actually enjoying and responding to English lectures. Previously, I merely slept through them. The visual effects and attention-catching audio make me want to watch, listen and learn....
>
> The general treatment of the language as a subject has also helped. Heretofore, all my English teachers have set such rigid rules of form and content that there has been little room left for innovation and imagination. The much more relaxed atmosphere of English 109 leaves more room for individual freedom. This concept has made essay writing change from a sickening chore into an interesting challenge. More freedom of expression has improved my opinion of English.
>
> The tutorial lab method of essay writing

makes English more desirable too. Writing essays under supervision is easier and takes less time. The tutorial lab also brings about a smaller student-teacher ratio than I have ever before experienced. The more personal relationship between student and teacher is highly conducive to good writing.

(b) ENGLISH 110, Introduction to Essay Writing II

Terms Offered: Winter
Credit: 0.5
Prerequisite: English 109
Type of Teaching: 1 lecture, 1 lab per week
Suitable for: Students who have successfully completed English 109, and who wish to go on to learn more sophisticated forms of essay writing and development.
Calendar Description: The course teaches the construction of the persuasive essay, with attention to the elements of logical thinking, to the techniques of successful persuasion, and to the demands of the library research paper. Six to eight writing assignments are required.

(c) ENGLISH 129R, Introduction to Written English
Terms Offered: Fall, Winter, Summer
Credit: 0.5
Prerequisite: Open only to students whose maternal language is not English and who lack language mastery sufficient for admission to other introductory English language courses.
Type of Teaching: 1 lecture, 2 labs, 2 tutorials
Suitable for: Students whose first language is not English and who have serious problems with written English.
Calendar Description: Instruction provided in basic grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, elements of composition and essay writing including focus on theme, development of central idea, exposition and argumentation. Minimum of 4 hours of instruction each week with additional tutorial hours as required.
Comments: Students for whom English is a second language have very particular writing problems which differentiate them from those of English-speaking students: (e.g., the Chinese student's omission of definite and indefinite articles, 'the' and 'a'). Sometimes, the problem is one of idiom (e.g., the overseas student who wrote in her Sociology essay on 'Retirement': "Sharing with each other of the same boat can indeed be uplifting and encouraging for the retiree".)

II. Courses in More Advanced Written English

(a) ENGLISH 209: Advanced Essay Writing

Terms Offered: Fall
Credit: 0.5
Type of Teaching: Lectures, and workshops in which student writing is discussed.
Suitable for: Second year students or above who have already mastered basic writing skills.
Calendar Description: Provides further opportunities for serious students of writing to study and to practise descriptive, expository, argumentative and persuasive writing.
Comments: This course concentrates on the finer points of writing, with a major emphasis on the role of the audience, or readership. This is not a course for absolute beginners. Some of the areas covered include: use of syllogisms and logic; anticipating an opposing viewpoint; the logical ordering of ideas; structure; analysis of writing; word value and connotation; jargon. In brief, a student should finish the course with his logical, argumentative abilities finely honed, his sense of word value heightened, and his writing exorcised of wordiness and jargon.

(b) ENGLISH 210: Report Writing[1]
Terms Offered: Fall, Winter, Spring
Credit: 0.5
Suitable for: Students who already have the basic writing skills, whose course work demands material presented in the form of a report, rather than an essay - the distinction is outlined more fully below. Second year students or above.
Calendar Description: The course teaches the many functions of the report - an orderly and objective communication of factual information which serves some specific purpose. Students will receive practice in research, in organization, and in writing many kinds of reports.
Comments: In this rigorous course, the students are taught brevity. They are taught to scrutinize language closely, use language economically, and order their thoughts logically. The instructor of this course says: "Too often, the writer assumes the reader has more knowledge or interest than he has. This assumption can be fatal to your purpose, because your first job is getting and holding a reader's attention. In your role as a report writer, your very existence depends on the goodwill of your reader, because the report writer with

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[1] This course is highly recommended for Geography Co-op Students.

reports that go unread is an ex-report writer - and eventually an unemployed person." The course further emphasises the usefulness and technique of both the outline and the act of revision.

(c) **ENGLISH 150:** English as an Instrument of Thought and Communication I

Terms Offered: Fall and Winter
Credit: 0.5
Type of Teaching: Lab
Suitable for: Students from all disciplines who wish to improve their reading and writing skills. Again, a grasp of the basic writing skills is assumed.
Calendar Description: In order to develop clarity of thought and critical awareness, students will identify and study in several media the various ends that are served by language: objective reporting; persuasion; argument; and emotional, social and artistic expression. There are about eight written assignments.
Comments: This course, which in past years has grabbed the students' interest by employing a variety of audio-visual aids such as video and film, is designed chiefly to heighten the students' sensitivity to the written word, and subsequently, their own use of language. Some of the areas covered include: the resources of language; its limits; how language shapes our thought; fact and opinion; prejudice and discrimination; the misuse of language. The students also consider the use of language in newspapers, advertisements and TV commercials.

(d) **ENGLISH 151:** English as an Instrument of Thought and Communication II

Terms Offered: Winter
Credit: 0.5
Prerequisites: English 150
Calendar Description: A continuation of English 150. From a basis of simple semantics and elementary logic, students will proceed to examine more complex language in fiction and other forms of literature. About six written exercises are assigned.

(e) **ENGLISH 140R:** The Use of English I

Terms Offered: Fall and Winter
Credit 0.5
Calendar Description: The use and abuse of spoken and written English. The study and evaluation of language as it is used for various purposes (e.g., colloquial, scientific, legal, political, commercial, journalistic, literary) in order to increase critical awareness and to

help students to write clearly and effectively.

(f) ENGLISH 141R: The Use of English II

Terms Offered: Winter
Credit: 0.5
Calendar Description: A continuation of English 140R. The study of factual, emotive, scienfitic and imaginative writing; relevance and context; meaning, tone, feeling and intention.
Prerequisite: English 140R

PART II

Suggested Handouts for Students

(Instructors may wish to duplicate some or all of these for use in class).

A. MARKING GUIDELINE I

B. MARKING GUIDELINE II

C. PAPER OUTLINE

D. GUIDELINES FOR REVISING A PAPER

E. CHECKLIST FOR THE FINAL DRAFT

F. A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY MISUSED AND CONFUSED WORDS

G. PLAGIARISM

H. FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

I. UNDERLYING MEANINGS IN TECHNICAL WRITINGS

J. SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF COMMAS

HANDOUT A: MARKING GUIDELINE

Mechanics: A minimal paper will reveal at least an adequate grasp of mechanics. An average paper will reveal a good grasp of mechanics an excellent paper will reveal a mastery of them.

Marking Guideline

	Material	Organization	Style
EXCELLENT	Clear and penetrating ideas. Mature grasp and assimilation of subject. Accurate documentation.	Clear focus, thesis is provocative or original. Clear and purposeful development. Rich in detail, rigorous in reasoning. Smooth transitions.	Diction clear and concise, revealing concer for reader and delight in language. Varied, rhythmical sentence. Appropriate tone, pointed emphasis.
GOOD	Clear and interesting ideas. Good grasp of subject with some omissions. Accurate documentation.	Clear and specific focus. Direct and adequate development. Sufficient but limited details, sound reasoning. Adequate transitions.	Diction appropriate and accurate. Varied and appropriate sentences. Tone generally appropriate; emphasis apparent rather than pointed.
FAIR	Clear ideas. Grasp of subject but assimilation incomplete. Accurate documentation.	Thesis clear but simple or insufficient. Barely sufficient details, occasionally faulty reasoning. Some awkward transitions or gaps.	Diction limited or wordy. Occasional sentence variety. Tone and emphasis not always appropriate.
POOR	Confused thoughts. Little or no documentation.	No focus, insufficient details, faulty reasoning, no transitions.	Awkward and faulty language.

NOTE: To be considered excellent, a paper should have received an excellent rating in each of the three categories; to pass, a paper should have received at least a fair rating in each category.

HANDOUT B: MARKING GUIDELINE II

Name:_____

Essay Evaluation

	Good	Satisfactory	Weak
Adaptation to assignment			
Understanding of work studied			
Insights into work studied			
Clear central thesis			
Clarity of ideas			
Development of ideas			
Effective organization			
Use of quotations, references			
Paragraphing			
Sentence structure			
Grammar			
Diction			
Spelling			
Punctuation			

Suggestions and Comments:

Grade: _____ Marker: _____

HANDOUT C

PAPER OUTLINE[1]

Introduction

1. Do you have an introductory paragraph stating what you will do?
2. Why is the topic important or interesting?
3. How are you going to investigate the topic?

Data

1. Where are the sources of the data?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the data?
3. What are some of the problems involved in using the data?

Results and Analysis

1. How did you manipulate the data, and what was the rationale?
2. Have you clearly presented and discussed your results?

Conclusions:

1. What is the significance of the results of your study?
2. If you were to follow up on the study, what would you do?

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[1] Adapted from "Teaching Writing in a Geography Class", by Michael Libbee and Dennis Young, Journal of Geography, Vol. 82, No. 1 (1983) pp. 23-25.

HANDOUT D

GUIDELINES FOR REVISING A PAPER

Step 1

You have written your first draft. Now stick it under the mattress, at the bottom of your stinkiest drawer - anywhere that hides it from your sight and puts it out of your mind for at least a few hours, preferably a day or more. Go and canoe around a lake, drink a few beers, but do not look at that essay! This is important. You have to get far away from your work in both time and head space, because your next step is to look at it objectively; indeed, you are going to try to imagine how a reader other than yourself would read your essay.

Step 2

The next step is to retrieve it from its hiding hole and read it out loud. This is embarrassing. It can also be dangerous. Your room mate could well break your head open with a well-aimed Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary. Go and do it in the bathroom or, if you are that way inclined, go and read it to the ducks in the park.

There are good reasons for doing this (although you have every reason to doubt it). When we read to ourselves, silently, we frequently skim the words, jump phrases, because we feel familiar with them and can often anticipate what will be said. This is even more true of something we have written ourselves. After all, you have probably been closeted in the library with that essay material for a couple of days now and feel as familiar with it as you do with your bed socks. Reading the piece of writing aloud forces us to read every word, and every sentence. We can hear at once if something is wrong, for instance:

- unnecessary and awkward repetitions
- confused constructions
- long winded and/or unnecessarily involved sentences
- words that just do not sound right - trust your instincts on this one; if it does not sound right, it probably is not.

Step 3

The next step is to read the essay, trying to imagine what it would read like to Godfrey Gowk. Godfrey

- knows little or nothing about the subject you are writing about.

- is very stupid. If a sentence can in any way be misunderstood, he will misunderstand it.
- is a cynic. He's not going to believe anything you say without hard evidence.

In other words, you cannot make any assumptions about your reader's knowledge or intelligence.

Step 4

As you re-read your paper, ask yourself the following questions regarding the CONTENT, the ORGANIZATION, and the WORDING:

CONTENT:

1. Do these details/examples/illustrations support my point? Would a cynic be convinced? Is more (or better) evidence required?

2. Is the information clear? Could someone who knows nothing about the topic understand what I have written?

ORGANIZATION:

1. Have I said right at the beginning what the paper is about, so that someone will not think I am talking about something else?

2. Does each paragraph act like a building brick, each one built upon the preceding one, advancing and constructing the argument?

3. Does the ending sum up what I have said, so that a reader with a memory like a tea strainer will be reminded of the major points in my paper?

WORDING:

1. Am I certain of the meaning and spelling of all the words. Are there any big words that do not sound right?

2. Have I used any technical terms that Godfrey would not understand that I should explain?

3. Have I used the most accurate, appropriate, and simple word I could use?

Step 5

The next step is to check over the finer points of your final draft, such as format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

HANDOUT E

CHECKLIST FOR THE FINAL DRAFT

Format

1. Is the introduction a "map" of the rest of the essay, showing the reader where all the details and facts are leading?

2. Does the introduction avoid the following beginnings:
   - the panoramic beginning, "Since the beginning of time..."
   - the obvious trite beginning, "Geography is very important to us as human beings..."?

3. Does the conclusion summarize the points made in the essay?

4. Are the paragraphs an appropriate length, four or five sentences long? Is each paragraph built around one central idea?

5. Are all quotations/references/facts obtained from other sources appropriately referenced in a footnote or endnote?

6. Does the bibliography list all the works cited in the body of the essay?

Punctuation

1. Are there commas before every and and but that need them?

2. Do any commas separate a subject from its verb, e.g., Almost all the people, died of frostbite? If so, ERASE THEM.

3. Are words that will not fit completely on the line split according to their syllabication (the dictionary marks the syllables with a dot: syl.lables). For example, suf-fi-cient.

4. Does punctuation FOLLOW all parentheses? e.g., "The mountains are singing" (p. 34).

5. Are quotation marks surrounding all quoted material taken word-for-word from books?

6. Do all complete sentences end with a period or other end punctuation such as a question mark or exclamation mark?

Spelling

1. Have I checked all words I am unsure of in the dictionary?

2. Have I double checked that I have not confused similar words (see the Glossary of Frequently Confused and Abused Words)?

3. Do all possessive nouns and pronouns have apostrophes correctly placed?
   's is added only to the nouns doing the owning:
   the girl's boots (the boots of the girl)
   the girls' boots (the boots of the girls)
   Note that it's means it is; its paws (the paws of the cat) is the possessive form.

Diction

1. Is each word used appropriately? Is it the simplest and most accurate word to use in that context?

2 Have I double-checked for any missing words?

3. Are the prepositions (e.g., in, of, on, at, for, etc.) paired correctly with the appropriate word? Some examples:
   has consequences for
   rejected by
   focus on
   learn about
   affected by
   conflict with
   different from (not than)

4. Are adverbs and adjectives used correctly? Some common examples of misuse are:
   Wrong: The old car still works good (adjective).
   Right: The old car still works well (adverb).
   Wrong: It was a real hard climb (adjective).
   Right: It was a really hard climb (adverb).

   Adjectives modify pronouns and nouns:
   A hot piece of toast.
   They are close to the edge.

   Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs:
   A really hot piece of toast.
   It was a moderately good film.
   He got away very quickly.

5. Are the comparisons correct?
   He is bigger (denotes size) than his sister.
   There are more (denotes number) pigs than goats.
   Dogs are different from (not than) cats.

6. Have I avoided contractions such as:
   it's.....it is
   won't.....will not
   haven't.....have not?
   These are not appropriate for a formal essay or report.

Deadwood

Deadwood is used here to mean words that merely 'pad out' the essay, that add no significant meaning, information or description. Watch out for these constructions and cut out the deadwood:

1. For...they/he/she/it
   For some people they do try hard to see the problem.
   Better: Some people do try hard to see the problem.

2. It was...that
   It was diagnosed by a doctor that he was dead.
   Better: A doctor diagnosed that he was dead.

3. Watch out for these common acts of wordiness and alter them as shown:
   owing to the fact that.....because, since
   in regard to.....about
   in an efficient manner.....efficiently
   in the matter of.....about
   in respect to.....about
   in many instances.....often, frequently
   it is the belief of.....he believes
   it is comprised of.....it comprises/it consists of

Syntax

1. Have I broken down run-on sentences into separate sentences? The most common run-on sentence is this one, using 'however':
   Wrong: I had a watch, however, I lost it.
   Right: I had a watch; however, I lost it.
   Right: I had a watch, but I lost it.

2. Have I checked for sentence fragments? A complete sentence must have a subject and a verb.

3. Do all the verbs agree with their subjects?
   The horses eat the hay (plural subject, plural verb).
   The horse eats the hay (singular subject, singular verb).
   Some common mistakes are:
   Right: A set (subject) of keys is on the table.
   Wrong: A set of keys are on the table.
   Right: The relationship between the two families was good.
   Wrong: The relationship between the two families were good.

4. Are the tenses within each sentence consistent? In general, you should decide before writing your essay which tense it will be written in and stick to it.

5. Are there any instances of faulty parallelism? i.e., when items are listed, are they listed in the same grammatical form?
   Right: He moved lightly, quickly, and silently.
   Wrong: The duties will be answering the phone, to assist customers, and keeping the files in order.
   Right: The duties will be answering the phone, assisting the customers, and keeping the files in order.
   One way to check for faulty parallelism is to actually write out (or imagine writing out) the sentence as a list, e.g., I do not want a car because it is:
   a) unnecessary
   b) dirty
   c) costs too much
   It is obvious that you cannot say "It is costs too much"; you would have to say "it is expensive".

6. Are all the modifying words placed next to the words they modify?

Pronouns

1. Does every 'it' have its antecedent?
   "It is commonly believed that..."
   - Here, 'it' has no antecedent, i.e., it refers back to no noun.

2. Does every pronoun agree with its antecedent?
   Right: The group submitted its report. - Group is the antecedent; its is the pronoun; both must be singular.
   Wrong: The group submitted their report.
   Right: The members of the group submitted their report.

HANDOUT F

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY MISUSED AND CONFUSED WORDS[1]

A

ADAPT/ADOPT
To adapt is to modify something to fit a new purpose; to adopt is to take it over as it is.

ADVISE/ADVICE
Advice is what you get when advisers advise you.

AFFECT/EFFECT
Affect is 'to produce an effect on' effect is to 'bring about', e.g., "effect a change".

ALOT
Wrong: alot
Right: a lot

ALTERNATIVE/ALTERNATE
Alternative: Death or exile!
Alternate means 'arranged by terms', e.g., "He and I did the work on alternate days" - i.e., by turns of one day each.
Alternate may also be used as a verb.

AMONG/BETWEEN
Between has 2 in mind among has more than 2.

AMOUNT/NUMBER
Use amount with general heaps of things, "a small amount of interest"; use number of with things that can be counted, "a large number of votes".

ANYONE/ANY ONE
"Anyone could see that any one of them might have committed the murder."

C

CAN/MAY
Can means ability may asks permission.
"Can I go?" therefore means "Have I the physical capability to go?"; "May I go?" means "Will you give me permission to go?"

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[1] Based partly on Sheridan Baker's "Glossary of Usage", in The Practical Stylist (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1977), 4th ed., pp. 162-190; partly on Eric Partridge's Usage and Abusage (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1973); and partly on observations of student essays at the University of Waterloo.

CITE/SITE

Cite means 'refer to the words of', e.g. "He cited the Bible..." Site refers to location e.g., "The site of the building..."

COMPLIMENT/COMPLEMENT

Complement is a completion compliment is a flattery, e.g., "When the regiment reached its full complement of recruits, the general gave it a flowery compliment."

CONTINUAL/CONTINUOUS

Continual means 'frequently repeated' continuous means 'without interruption'. Hence, "She continually banged her head on the wall." "A continuous line of hills."

COUNCIL/COUNSEL

Counsel means advice or to advise; a council is an assembly of some kind, e.g., academic council, church council.

CRITERION/CRITERIA

Criterion is singular criteria is plural

D

DATA

Data is a plural word and takes a plural verb, e.g., "The data are here." The singular, datum, is rarely used.

DILEMMA

Dilemma does not mean 'crisis', 'problem'. It has a very precise meaning: it signifies an inescapable choice, an enforced decision to be made between two evils of equal force, and not more than two (literally, "two horns").

E

EVERYDAY/EVERY DAY

You wear your everyday clothes every day.

F

FARTHER/FURTHER

Farther means distance further means time or figurative distance, e.g., "We must travel even farther before we arrive in Rome"; "We must discuss this matter further before making a decision."

FEWER/LESS

Less answers "How Much?" Few answers "How Many?"
e.g, "There is less flour than there is sugar."
e.g., "There are fewer pickles than I had hoped."

G

GOOD/WELL

Good is the adjective: 'good game'.
Well is the adverb: 'well done'.

H

HOPEFULLY

Hopefully does not mean 'it is to be hoped that', as in "Hopefully, the war will end." It is an adverb meaning 'in a hopeful manner', as in "It is better to journey hopefully than to arrive."

HOWEVER

However is often, incorrectly, used to replace 'but'. It is not, however, a conjunction. Many students fall into the trap of the run-on sentence by using it as a conjunction.
Wrong: "I could go on, however the topic is much too vast".
Right: "I could go on; however, the topic is much to vast", or "I could go on, but the topic is much too vast."

I

ITS/IT'S

Its: the possessive pronoun, as in "The cat licked its paws."
It's: the contraction of 'it is'.

L

LEAD/LED

Led is the past tense of lead (rhymes with 'creed'), e.g., "Moses will lead us to the Promised Land"; "The devil had led us all astray."

LIKELY

A peculiarly Canadian misuse.
Wrong: "Unemployment will likely increase".
Right: "Unemployment is likely to increase", or "Unemployment will probably increase."

LITERALLY

Often used colloquially in the manner of 'absolutely' and 'fantastic' both of which have just about lost their original meanings. Literally, means 'exactly to the letter', taking the words in their primary sense, without allegory or metaphor. Hence, it is wrong to say "He was literally speechless. He could only murmur: 'Good God!'" This speechlessness would only be literal if he had been incapable of uttering the words we are told he murmured.[1]

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[1] Wilson Follett, Modern American Usage, ed., Jacques Barzun (New York: Warner Books, 1966).

M

MEDIUM/MEDIA
Medium is singular and takes a singluar verb, "The medium is the message". Media is plural and takes a plural verb, "The Broadcasting and Television media are irresponsible."

MOST
Does not mean almost.
Wrong: "Most everybody likes eating."
Right: "Almost everybody likes eating most of the time."

N

NONE
This pronoun means 'no one' or 'not any' and takes a singular verb, as do each, every, everyone and nobody.
Wrong: "None are black."
Right: "None is so wild that he cannot be tamed."

O

ONLY
Make sure you have put the word 'only' where you want it:
Wrong: "He only ate red jelly beans."
Right: "He ate only red jelly beans."

P

PHENOMENON/PHENOMENA
Phenomenon is singular and takes a singular verb, "This phenomenon is not likely to occur again." Phenomena is plural and takes a plural verb, "These phenomena are extraordinary".

PRACTICE/PRACTISE
Practice is the noun, "He has gone to his baseball practice."
Practise is the verb, "He went to practise baseball."
Even the experts confuse the two; just think of 'advice (noun) and 'advise' (verb).

PROOF/EVIDENCE
Proof results from having enough evidence to establish a point beyond doubt.

Q

QUOTE
Quote is not a noun; it is a verb.
Wrong: "The following quote proves my point." The noun is "quotation", not "quote".
Right: "I will now quote Hardy to prove my point."

R

REAL
Do not use real for very. Real is an adjective meaning

'actual.'
Wrong: "It was a real nice day."
Right: "It was a really (or very) nice day."

T

THAT/WHICH
That defines and restricts which explains and is not restrictive, e.g., "A house that faces north is cool." The clause, 'that faces north', defines what kind of house it is. If you cut the clause, you lose the main point of the statement. In the sentence, "The house, which faces north, is cool", the clause simply elaborates. If you cut it out, you do not alter appreciably the main point of the statement.

THUS
Does not mean 'therefore'. It means 'in this way'.
Wrong: "My mother died last night; thus I will go and live with my aunt."
Right: "The king won all his battles; thus, he conquered the world."

W

WHO'S/WHOSE
Who's means "who is" us Whose is the regular possessive of 'who': The knave whose fingers are sticky has been stealing the jam tarts."

HANDOUT G

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas as if they were yours. In an essay, it is the failure to give proper credit for material that you have obtained from books, articles, data sets, maps, or oral sources.

IF IN DOUBT, FOOTNOTE IT!

Acknowledgement of sources can be carried too far:
Thou shalt not kill.[1] was not a principle that entered into Ivan the Terrible's[2] consciousness;[3] of all the kings and emperors in the world,[4] he was the most bloodthirsty,[5] the most ruthless in demanding his pound of flesh.[6]

This student has not taken any chances, but as you can see, he has a quarter page of footnotes for four lines of text. It is not possible to acknowledge the sources of every little bit of one's accumulated knowledge, but sources which are used for our immediate purposes in writing an essay or report must be acknowledged in a footnote. This includes:

- Facts
- Opinions
- Ideas
- Direct quotations.

Using Quotations

As a general rule, paraphrasing ideas or facts from secondary sources is preferable to directly quoting the material unless the author has phrased the idea or fact in a particularly memorable, startling or original way. This, however, has its dangers.

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[1] God, 800 B.C. Rpt. by Moses, The Ten Commandments.
[2] Ivan the Terrible's mother is the source for Ivan the Terrible, 1530.
[3] Sigmund Freud was the first to bring this term into common currency in his book The Sick Mind and the Deviant Consciousness (Vienna: University of Vienna Press, 1895).
[4] According to the author of Genesis, God created the world. See The Bible, no date.
[5] This expression was first coined by my kindergarten teacher, Miss Blopper, in 1964, when she called me a "bloodthirsty little brat" after I had deliberately stomped on a fieldmouse during a nature study walk.
[6] Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice (v.iii.77)

You must acknowledge your source if you paraphrase (put into your own words) someone else's idea. This is where many students commit plagiarism - sometimes unintentionally - because they think that if the idea or opinion is written out in their own words, then the idea or opinion has somehow become theirs.

HANDOUT H

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

There are two acceptable systems of references: the footnote system and the author/date system.[1] Whichever system is chosen, it must be used consistently. Some professors prefer the footnote system, others prefer the author/date system, but most professors will accept either as long as it is used correctly. The prudent student will ask about the referencing preference of the professor before starting to write a paper.

Footnote System

A number, typed half a space above the line, is used in the text of the paper to indicate that there is a footnote reference. The footnote will give the source from which the information was obtained or, occasionally, will provide additional explanatory information. The footnote number should appear at the end of a quotation or at the end of a sentence or paragraph if the information was paraphrased from some particular source. The footnotes to which these numbers refer may appear at the bottom of the page or they may be listed in consecutive order on a separate page at the end of the paper. It is preferable to put the footnotes at the bottom of each page because the reader is more likely to read them. If, however, you are not an experienced typist, you will find it easier to put the footnotes at the end of your paper.

Footnotes should follow the following form:

From a journal:

J.H. Momsen, "Women in Canadian Geography", The Canadian Geographer, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1980) pp. 177-183.

(Note that the title of the article is in quotation marks; the title of the journal is underlined in typed papers, in italics in published work. Many publishers shorten the citation to 24:2 (1980) 177-183 to save space.)

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[1] P.J. Smith, "Instructions for Contributors", The Canadian Geographer, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1980) pp. 207-213. In this brief paper, Professor Smith succinctly lays out the rules that must be followed in manuscripts prepared for The Canadian Geographer. See particularly his guidelines on "References", pp. 210-211.

From a paper in a book:

A.F. Burkhardt, "Canada and Secession: Some Consequences of Separatism", in Readings in Canadian Geography ed. by R.M. Irving (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 3rd edition, 1978) pp. 10-16.

Author/Date System

In the author/date system, instead of a number indicating that a source is given in a footnote, the author and date of publication of a reference are inserted in parentheses in the text, usually at the end of a sentence or paragraph e.g., (MOMSEN, 1980). This abbreviated reference is then cited in detail in a bibliography, usually entitled References. The references are listed in alphabetical order with surnames coming first. The form is slightly different from that of footnotes:

From a journal:

MOMSEN, J.H. (1980), "Women in Canadian Geography", The Canadian Geographer, 24:177-183.

From a paper in a book:

BURKHARDT, A.F. (1978), "Canada and Secession: Some Consequences of Separatism," in R.M. Irving (ed.), Readings in Canadian Geography (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston) 10-16.

(Note that the authors' names are in upper case and that the date is given after the author's name).

When the author/date system is used, explanatory footnotes using numbers as indicators should be kept to a minimum. Above all, numbered footnote references must not be used along with the author/date system.

Style Manuals

In this brief guideline to footnotes and references, it is not possible to cover all the rules that you need to know. Nor should you expect to memorize all of the rules for all possible cases. Instead make use of a good style manual.[1] It is also helpful to consult journals such as The Canadian Geographer to see how authors have handled specific footnoting problems.

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[1] K. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 3rd rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). This is the most comprehensive style guide available. You will find it useful throughout your university years and beyond.

HANDOUT I

UNDERLYING MEANINGS IN TECHNICAL WRITINGS[1]

"It is believed that..."
I think.

"It is generally believed that..."
A couple of other guys think so too.

"There are good reasons for believing..."
Well, who really knows?

"It might be argued that..."
I have such a good answer for this objection that I shall now raise it.

"It has long been known..."
I have not bothered to look up the original reference.

"Of great theoretical and practical importance..."
Interesting to me.

"Three of the observations were chosen for detailed study..."
The results on the others did not make sense and were ignored.

"The most reliable values are those of Jones..."
I have not read anyone else.

---

[1] Origin unknown. Has been floating around the English Department for years.

HANDOUT J

SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF COMMAS[1]

Commas are used for two reasons: they help to clarify writing by preventing possible ambiguities or misinterpretations, and they make writing easier to be read by marking natural pauses and separations.

- Commas may be used to set off items in a series, e.g., "The semester has been exhausting, frustrating, and generally depressing."
- Commas may be used to set off subordinate clauses that come at the beginning of a sentence, e.g., "If that pipeline is not repaired, the city will soon run out of fuel."
- If the subordinate clause comes <u>after</u> the main clause, a comma is not necessary, e.g., "I cannot come until I have finished my work."

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[1] Origin unknown. Useful to attach to the essays of those students who do not know where to put their commas.